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Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions, Inc.

deKoven House Community Center
27 Washington Street
Middletown, CT 06457
860 344-8321
www.caciwc.org

TESTIMONY TO THE CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING Friday, February 21, 2014

The Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions, Inc (CACIWC) is pleased to submit testimony on the following bill:

H.B. No. 5141 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR VIOLATION OF A MUNICIPAL ORDINANCE REGULATING THE OPERATION OR USE OF A DIRT BIKE, SNOWMOBILE OR ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE.

CACIWC is strongly in favor of H.B. 5141 as it will help with efforts to protect important habitats in Connecticut, especially those lands of high conservation value. Our member conservation commissions work to identify, index, and preserve critical habitats within their municipalities, while our member inland wetlands commissions endeavor to protect wetlands and watercourses within their towns. Connecticut conservation commissions, working with their local land trust partners, struggle to prevent noise pollution and trail damage resulting from ATV, dirt bike, and snowmobile use in local parks and open parcels where these vehicles are prohibited from operating. While many ATV, dirt bike, and snowmobile owners operate their vehicles responsibly in permitted areas, others flout local laws, repeatedly entering restricted areas despite multiple warnings by local officials.

To counter these repeat offenders, some of our member commissions have requested authority for stricter penalties to help their municipal law enforcement partners protect local lands from such damage and noise. CACIWC has long supported recommendations for enhancing law enforcement efforts to control these problems with requirements for vehicle registration and strict penalties, including vehicle forfeiture. This proposed bill will greatly aid our municipal partner efforts to enforce local ordinances and we urge its passage.

CACIWC is a non-profit organization working to protect Connecticut's wetlands, watercourses, and other natural resources through support and education of the 2000+ volunteers and staff that carry out the responsibilities of Connecticut's Conservation Commissions and Inland Wetlands Commissions. CACIWC, representing its member commissions, works with municipalities and environmental groups to promote public support for the judicious management and conservation of Connecticut's natural resources. For additional information contact Alan J. Siniscalchi, President at board@caciwc.org or visit www.caciwc.org.